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The Quiet Hotel

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Frank Dumont

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The Quiet Hotel

A Farcical Sketch in One Act

BY

FRANK DUMONT

Author of "HOW A WOMAN KEEPS A SECRET",
"THE DEPOT LUNCH COUNTER," etc.



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The Quiet Hotel

CHARACTERS

MISS CALCIUM *An actress, looking for rest.*
SUSAN *Who runs the Quiet Hotel.*
RUBBER-NECK . . . *Colored porter and general assistant.*

NOTE.—Rubber-Neck may easily be played as a white character part if preferred.

TIME:—Twenty-five minutes.

STORY OF THE SKETCH

Susan and Rubber-Neck keep a country hotel advertised as "very quiet." Miss Calcium, an actress, comes with her wardrobe in one suit-case. "You may stay just one day on that baggage." Rubber-Neck wants to be an actor. Miss Calcium's attempt at tragedy scares Rubber-Neck and Susan. "This is a quiet hotel." She shows them how to do it. "You are tied to the track." "Hold on, maybe dat train don't stop here." The thrilling rescue scene. Rubber-Neck's train of cars. "You're both real actors. We'll do a sister act in vaudeville." "All right; it's better than keeping a quiet hotel."

COSTUMES

MISS CALCIUM. Traveling suit and hat, very pronounced and dashing in style. She may be anywhere from twenty to forty in age.

SUSAN. Smart chambermaid's costume, with rather short skirt, and a neat little apron. Age, twenty to thirty.

RUBBER-NECK. Black face (or white, if preferred). May be of any age. Wears dark trousers, gingham shirt, and a uniform cap with word "Porter" on front. Costume may be made comic as desired.

PROPERTIES

For Miss Calcium, dress-suit case and umbrella. For Rubber-Neck, child's train of cars, dinner-bell, whistle. For Susan, call-bell.

The noise of an approaching train is easily imitated behind scenes with a piece of sheet-iron which is struck with two beaters similar to egg beaters. This effect may, however, be omitted if preferred, as the action does not absolutely depend on it.

The Quiet Hotel

SCENE.—*Any plain interior will serve. Entrances R. and L. Table up C. May be furnished, if preferred, as a country hotel office, with table C., counter up L., with ink-bottle and pen, and bell. Posters on walls advertising county fairs and circuses, sales of stock, etc. A few old wooden armchairs scattered about.*

(Curtain rises on empty stage. After a slight pause enter
MISS CALCIUM, R.)

MISS C. Well, this place is well named. It's the Quiet Hotel, all right. It ought to be a fine rest cure for my tired nerves. (Calls musically.) Hello! (Listens.) My, just hear that echo! (Calls again.) Hello! Hello! No answer. I never before saw a house so completely full of emptiness. (Calls.) Landlord! Clerk! Bell-boy! Telephone operator! Waiter! Chambermaid!

(Each time she calls she raps on counter or floor with umbrella.)

(Enter SUSAN, L., leisurely, with hands in apron pockets.)

SUSAN. Oh, good-morning! Er—were you looking for any one?

MISS C. (loudly). Looking for — Say, is this really a hotel?

SUSAN. Certainly. A little less noise, please. We're not used to it.

MISS C. Oh, indeed. And who are you, please?

SUSAN. Who, me? Oh, I'm it.

MISS C. It?

SUSAN. Sure. The main squeeze, the high guy, the whole works; in fact, I'm the hotel.

MISS C. I don't understand. You —

SUSAN. Why, I'm understudy for the landlord, that's

all, and incidentally I'm clerk, bookkeeper, chambermaid, manicure, stenographer, head cook and bottle washer. In fact, I'm the whole force, except the porter.

MISS C. (*dazed*). Oh, except the porter. I see. So you are in full charge of the hotel?

SUSAN. Am I! If I quit the place it will have to close up and move to (*name near-by town*).

MISS C. You must be a very important person in this hotel.

SUSAN (*calmly*). I am. I own it.

MISS C. (*surprised*). You own it?

(Enter RUBBER-NECK, r. *He sneaks with exaggerated quietness toward the suit-case which is behind Miss C. She does not see him. As he is about to snatch it SUSAN frowns and shakes her head at him, and he hastily retreats to door r. His head, however, remains in sight, and he keeps his eye on the suit-case.*)

SUSAN. Yes. You see they owed me so much in wages it was cheaper to just give me the hotel than to pay up in cash.

MISS C. Well, you're lucky. (*Looks about.*) It looks like a fine place.

SUSAN. Best in the country. You get three meals a day here, and at each meal four kinds of meat—ram, lamb, sheep and mutton.

MISS C. But I don't like mutton.

SUSAN (*firmly*). Now don't tell me what you like or what you don't like. You like meals, don't you?

MISS C. Certainly, but —

SUSAN. Well, that's what you get here—meals, just plain meals.

MISS C. I don't think I'll like it here. When is the next train?

SUSAN. The next train just left.

(RUBBER makes another quiet dive for the bag, but SUSAN shakes her head and he scrambles back to door r.)

MISS C. What were you doing when I came in?

SUSAN. Oh, just sweeping down the halls and stairs, making the beds, checking up the accounts, doing up my hair, shifting two bureaus, setting the dining-room tables, and making an apple pie.

MISS C. Oh, is that all?

SUSAN. Yep—nothing to do till to-morrow. This is a very quiet, restful place.

MISS C. Well, I guess I'll try it. The doctor has ordered me to take a rest for a week.

SUSAN. A week, eh? I suppose you have lots of money?

MISS C. Well, no. You see, I'm an actress, and I've just closed one engagement and am waiting now for another.

SUSAN. Humph! Then you're out of a job?

MISS C. Er—yes, temporarily. What are your rates? Won't you call the porter and have him take my bag to a room?

(RUBBER starts toward bag again hopefully, but SUSAN checks him with a gesture.)

SUSAN. Well, I — What have you got in the bag?

MISS C. That bag contains my wardrobe.

(RUBBER disappears.)

SUSAN. Well, I guess you can stay one day on that baggage if you pay in advance. (Taps bell and calls off R. and L.) Porter! Porter! Ain't the help something awful nowadays? You can't never depend on them. Porter!

RUBBER (rushing in R. all out of breath). Yas'm, yas'm. Here I is.

SUSAN (severely). Where were you? What do you mean by keeping this lady waiting?

RUBBER. Well, I was jest out to the gay-rage, fixin' up the limousine, an' —

SUSAN (loftily). Well, you know I prefer the electric runabout in the afternoons. Show the lady up to Room 948.

RUBBER. Yas'm. (Scratches head doubtfully.) You said Room 948?

SUSAN. Yes, and be quick about it.

(RUBBER starts L. with bag, but returns.)

RUBBER. Yas'm. Excuse me—but is that de back room or de front room?

MISS C. Oh, any room will suit me. We actresses have to get used to all sorts of accommodations.

RUBBER (*setting bag down L.*) Oh, is you an actress?

SUSAN. Certainly she's an actress. She's played in Uncle Tom's Cabin, haven't you, Miss—Miss —

MISS C. Miss Calcium. I'd better sign the register. (*Goes to counter and writes in book.*) Yes, I've played Topsy and Little Eva. And I've supported John Drew.

RUBBER. Oh, my, oh, my, she supported John Drew. I'm goin' to tell his wife.

SUSAN. She means on the stage, stupid. You're a blockhead.

RUBBER. Guess I is. Every time I brush my hair I gets my fingers full of splinters. So you is an actress?

(*Walks around her admiringly.*)

MISS C. Certainly.

RUBBER. Well, I'm certainly pleased to meet you. I was on the stage once.

MISS C. Oh, were you? Then we are fellow Thespians.

RUBBER (*uncertainly*). Yas'm, I guess so. What secret society is dat?

MISS C. Thespians—actors, you know. How long were you on the stage?

RUBBER. About twelve hours a day.

MISS C. Twelve hours a day! You ought to belong to the Actors' Union. Where was it?

RUBBER. Oh, right heah, right heah. I drove the stage from heah to (*name small town*).

MISS C. (*laughing*). Oh, I see.

RUBBER. My, it's certainly been de dream of my life to meet an actress. (*Poses.*) I've always thought I'd be an actor.

SUSAN. You'd be a bad actor. You couldn't do it. You need talent to be an actor.

RUBBER. No, all you need is cheek. I got lots of cheek. And then, look at my shape. (*Poses.*) I'm goin' to join a show de first chance I get.

SUSAN. No you don't, Rubber; no you don't. I need you right here in the hotel.

RUBBER. Well, I made up my mind I'm goin' to do it.

SUSAN. Well, then, I'll have to confess. I'm an actress myself. I've been taking a course in the Theatrical Correspondence School.

MISS C. (*laughing*). Oh, dear! What could you do on the stage?

SUSAN. Walk on and make a bluff at it—the way I see lots of them do at (*name local theatre*).

RUBBER. And put on lots of paint.

MISS C. I never paint.

SUSAN. Neither do I. I belong to the Kalsominers' Union. If you paint you can't fool a woman for half a minute, but you can fool almost any man for nearly two minutes.

MISS C. Well, I'm thankful to say there's nothing false about me.

SUSAN. Is that your own hair?

MISS C. Yes, every curl and puff.

SUSAN. How much did you pay for it?

MISS C. Nature gave it to me. I have only to pull out a few hairpins and it falls down to my knees.

RUBBER. If you'd pull 'em all out it would fall down to the floor.

MISS C. You're a rude person. But we actresses have to meet all kinds.

RUBBER. Oh, my! I guess I better apologize. If I said anything I should be sorry for I'm glad of it.

SUSAN. You must excuse him. He never had any bringing up. Where was your father born?

RUBBER. In San Francisco.

SUSAN. And your mother?

RUBBER. In Boston.

SUSAN. Well, that accounts for it.

RUBBER. For what?

SUSAN. Your Chicago accent.

RUBBER. Now, don't go springing jokes like that on me.

MISS C. Oh, you'll hear jokes a good deal worse than that when you get on the stage. So you both want to act, do you?

SUSAN. I'm crazy about it.

RUBBER (*strutting around*). Just try me, dat's all. I'm willin' to play anythin' from Hamlet to pinochle.

MISS C. (*thoughtfully*). Well, I have been thinking lately of forming a little vaudeville company.

SUSAN (*edging up close to her, ecstatically*). Yes, yes—go on.

RUBBER (*edging up on the other side*). Uh-huh ! Go on, gal, I'm a-listenin'.

MISS C. And you're sure you'd like acting ?

SUSAN. } Yes, yes.
RUBBER. }

(*Slight pause*. MISS C. *slowly walks* R. *The others stand L.*)

MISS C. (*suddenly*). Ah, ha ! There he stands—(*pointing to RUBBER*) the man who murdered my father —

RUBBER (*scared*). Go 'way, woman, I don't know your father.

MISS C. (*continuing rapidly and tragically*). Then forced open the safe and took the jewels and the money.

RUBBER (*dodging behind table badly scared*). Now listen at dat woman lyin' about me. You can't prove it.

MISS C. (*turning on SUSAN*). And you—you helped him in his dastardly work. (*Goes L.*) You poisoned the child —muh—muh poor little che-ild.

(*She weeps. SUSAN retreats around table, but RUBBER pushes her away.*)

RUBBER. Go on away. Don't you touch me. You poisoned a kid. I always knew you was that kind of a woman. My, ain't you ashamed of yourself ?

MISS C. (*to both*). Then you destroyed the will and set fire to the house.

SUSAN. The woman's crazy !

RUBBER. Oh, let me out of here ! Police ! Fire ! Murder !

MISS C. (*making a sudden movement toward RUBBER*). Villain ! Your time has come. Scoundrel—you cannot escape me.

(*Makes a rush for the table. RUBBER and SUSAN both dive under it.*)

SUSAN (*under table*). Oh, dear, I'm sorry I let her stay.

RUBBER (*under table*). She's crazy as a June-bug—that's what she is. She's sufferin' with the heat.

MISS C. (*laughing silently—then continuing in tragic tone*). I have tracked you at last. I am that old man's daughter.

RUBBER. Say, lady, all the money I got's in the pocket of my other pants out in the stable. Won't you take it and leave here?

MISS C. Money! What do I care for money now! The law could not reach you—but I will.

(She seizes RUBBER and drags him from under the table, and throws him L.; then pulls out SUSAN, crying, "You, too," and throws her R. They sit on floor, frightened. Miss C. sits on table C., fanning herself.)

RUBBER. Honest, lady, I never done it.

SUSAN (crying). Oh, please go—please go.

MISS C. (laughing). Well, how do you like acting now?

RUBBER (rising). Was that acting?

SUSAN (rising). You don't mean it?

MISS C. Certainly. That is a scene from my great part in "A Woman's Secret; or, Foiled by Fate."

SUSAN. And people paid real money to see that?

MISS C. Of course. We played to capacity houses for weeks.

RUBBER. Gee! (He picks up suit-case and runs out R.)

SUSAN. Well, if people are as easy as that I guess I can get their money. What do you have to learn first?

MISS C. Well, the first thing is the voice. You must have a good, strong voice to be an actor.

(Enter RUBBER, R., swinging a lantern.)

RUBBER (in a loud singsong voice mostly in one note). Train—goin' west! Buffalo—Cleveland—Chicago—Omaha—Denver—Salt Lake—Yellowstone Park—Seattle—Tacoma—Alaska—and all way stations!—Train—goin'—west! Al-l-l-l aboard!

MISS C. (putting hands over ears). Mercy, his voice is strong enough.

RUBBER. I can do it louder. (Begins again, more loudly.) Train goin'—east—Chicago—

MISS C. (hands over ears). That will do! I thought this was a quiet hotel.

SUSAN (grabbing RUBBER and stopping him). Cut it out. We know you can do it.

MISS C. So you liked that acting, did you?

SUSAN. Show us how to do it and you can board here for nothing.

MISS C. Well, that's very bad acting. I'm not going to do any more of it.

RUBBER. Not on me, you won't.

MISS C. But I'll show you how to do the real thing. When you've once begun, stick to it, and you'll win. Persistent effort—that's the key to success.

RUBBER. That's me. Hard work's my middle name. Yas'm, I kin stick to it all right.

MISS C. Very well. I see—I see you both have talent, and can stand hard knocks. (*To SUSAN.*) We'll go into vaudeville. You and I will do a sister act.

RUBBER. Oh, won't you let me be a sister to you?

MISS C. I'll think about it. I'll arrange a part for you in a melodramatic sketch I have written. I call it "The Special Train."

RUBBER (*starting across stage calling as before*). Train —goin'—north ! Nottingham—Newbury—Newport—Noblestown—Norwood—Nux Vomica, and New York ! All-i-1 aboard !

(SUSAN and Miss C. try to stop him.)

MISS C. Don't do that again ; do you hear ?

RUBBER. Yes'm. Tell me about dis "Special Train."

MISS C. All the managers are crazy about it.

RUBBER. If you stay here much longer I'll be as crazy as they are.

MISS C. Now this sketch is very simple and easily rehearsed. Here are the railroad tracks.

(*Points to floor.* RUBBER peers at floor, then taps his head.)

RUBBER. She's seeing things again !

MISS C. There is the ticket office ! (*Points R.*)

SUSAN. That's the barber shop.

MISS C. And I am—the villain !

RUBBER. We know that.

MISS C. (*to RUBBER.*) I take you and tie you to the railroad track.

RUBBER. Good-night ! (*Starts R.*)

MISS C. Wait a moment !

RUBBER. No, ma'am ! You are too dangerous for me.

MISS C. But no harm comes to you; for as the special train comes dashing along —

RUBBER (*interrupting*). Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Maybe dat train don't stop at dis station—then it's good-bye nigger for me!

SUSAN. Don't be a coward! You can die but once.

RUBBER. Well—once is enough for me! I don't know how to die. I ain't had no practice.

MISS C. Then I will not call upon you to lie upon the track—I will lie there myself.

SUSAN (*heroically*). And I will save you.

RUBBER. And I'll get the reward.

MISS C. Now, then, to business. I am tied to the track. (*To RUBBER.*) You'll be the train. You go and get a locomotive!

RUBBER. Say! I done told you that woman ain't right. Where am I going to steal a locomotive?

MISS C. Oh, get a train of cars! Now don't stand there talking. Do as I tell you. Get the train! Get the special train!

SUSAN (*imitating*). Get the train—get the special train. Ask Willie for a train of cars.

MISS C. (*pushing RUBBER L.*) Go on. Get the train. Get the special train!

(SUSAN and MISS C. *push RUBBER off L. 2 E., as he protests.*)

SUSAN (*laughing*). The idea! He doesn't know where to steal a little thing like a locomotive!

MISS C. Now to business! I lie here upon the tracks. (*Lies with head toward footlights.*) When I scream for help, you come and pull me off the tracks. Remember your cue.

SUSAN. All right! (*Runs up R. C.*) What's my cue?

MISS C. Save me—some one—save me!

SUSAN. All right. Save me—some one—save me!

MISS C. Ah! The train is coming at the rate of sixty miles a second.

SUSAN (*shouting*). Save me—some one—save me!

MISS C. (*sitting up*). Wait until I say it. The special train is coming at the rate of sixty miles a second. (*Music hurry. Whistle of train is heard in distance with noise of train. See properties. The noise grows louder and nearer. Miss C. screams.*) Save me! Save me! Who will save

me? (SUSAN is hopping about, not knowing what to do, and Miss C. repeats the cue several times, and then shouts over the din.) Come on and save me! That's your cue! (Just as SUSAN is about to drag Miss C. from the supposed tracks RUBBER prances on from L. 2 E., with a small tin or toy locomotive and cars to which a string is attached. He is ringing a dinner-bell and blowing a whistle, which he holds between his teeth. He goes across the stage making a detour to avoid running over the others. At R. he pauses and looks back at them, still ringing bell. Miss C. rises.) Oh, dramatic art! What crimes are committed in thy name! (To RUBBER.) Stop ringing that bell. (She stands c., SUSAN L. RUBBER stops ringing and begins to blow whistle.) Stop that whistling!

(Miss C. snatches whistle from RUBBER.)

RUBBER (*grieved and surprised*). Didn't you done tole me to stick to it, when I once begun?

SUSAN. Certainly she did.

MISS C. (*laughing*). Yes, I did, but —

RUBBER. Well, I'm a-stickin'. (*Rings bell.*) And you said this is the special train, didn't you?

MISS C. Yes, but this is a quiet hotel, and —

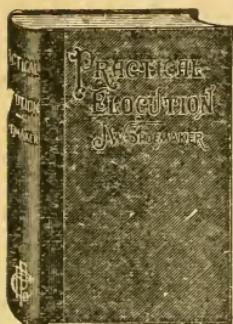
RUBBER (*firmly*). It's goin' to be still quieter. If you're goin' you better git on. Al-l-l aboard—special way train for the subway, the Great White Way and Broadway. (*Blows whistle.*) Al-l-l aboard!

SUSAN. That's it—that's the way I'm going. No more hotel for mine! (*Dramatic gesture.*) It's me for the foot-lights.

Miss C. (c., with others either side of her). You're both all right. Hereafter we're the Calcium Comedy Company, Unlimited! We'll take the Quiet Hotel to Broadway and make a noise with it they can hear half-way to San Francisco!—All-l-l aboard!

(*The sketch may be ended with a song or other specialty if preferred.*)

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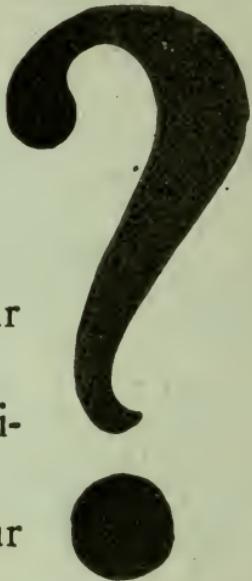
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